Surveying Employee Opinion on Performance Management

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Employee Focus Groups

Six focus groups, each lasting one hour, were conducted with employees representing a cross section of locations and job levels. Participants were selected, as work schedules allowed, to provide a diverse mix of employees (years of service, age, gender, etc.)

- 2 groups for Denver Campus
- 1 group for Health Sciences Center Campus
- 1 group for Colorado Springs Campus
- 2 groups for Boulder Campus

Dynamics of the Focus Groups

- Used closed-door facilities, no company observers.

- Focus groups were recorded. The resulting audiotapes and transcripts were used in the analysis by Watson Wyatt, but not provided to anyone at the University of Colorado to protect the anonymity of participants.

Focus Group Format

Attendees were asked to group issues into the following categories, represented by flip chart pages taped to the wall at the front of the room:

- Current System-What Works
- Current System-What Doesn't Work
- Alternative System-Opportunities
- Alternative System-Drawbacks

Focus Group Results:
Overall Themes – Unfavorable (1)

- Increase stability, flexibility, consistency and simplicity (fewer rules)
  - Reduce bureaucracy (molasses, byzantine)
  - Remove disparity between types of employees at CU (classified, faculty, professional exempt)
  - One personnel system for everyone
  - Faster process to remove poor performers
  - Bumping is good for a very few people, but creates a lot of disruption and morale problems
- Hiring practices (testing system and Rule of 3 are archaic and burdensome, increase ability to hire temps into permanent positions)
  - Currently are a waste of time and effort
  - Make tests relevant
  - More diversity through consistently equitable hiring practices
- Consistent, equitable, accurate, flexible, easy-to-write job descriptions
  - Fewer job classifications

Focus Group Results:
Overall Themes – Unfavorable (2)

- **Pay-for-performance**
  - **Apply pay-for-performance more consistently through increased training and accountability**
  - **Pay-for-performance must be funded to be meaningful**
  - **Add confidential supervisor evaluation to pay-for-performance**
  - **Pay tied to goals can be difficult and create inequity – goals are easier to set for some departments than others**
- Create growth opportunities instead of stifling those with ambition or talent
  - Remove 10% promotion salary cap
  - Upgrading without requirement to post jobs (it's a joke, time consuming, morale problems)
  - Reward for depth of experience, not just numbers supervised
- Improved benefits
  - More CU contribution for benefits (staff did not know the CU contribution level)
  - Sick leave accruals increased; increased trust for those using sick leave (no doctor's note required for only 3-day absence)

Focus Group Results: Overall Themes – Favorable

- Job security (no dismissal without cause and recourse)
- Legal rights that ensure fair employment practices
- PERA
- Equitable and objective hiring practices
- Written job descriptions
- **Pay for performance concept, with periodic job evaluations based on written goals**
- Benefit choice
- A system that's tied to government (makes it more trustworthy)
- Diversity of workforce
- Appreciation for years of experience

Design/Logistics of Survey

- Survey administration: May 20 – June 4, 2004
- 24 questions (some with sub-issues)
- 10 demographic questions
- Translations available through HR
  - Total Returned in English: 22
  - Total Returned in Laotian: 51
  - Total Returned in Spanish: 39
- Notified staff of survey via:
  - Campus broadcast e-mail (2-3 messages)
  - Groups without e-mail got hard copy notice
  - Article in May 20th *Silver and Gold*
- Overall Response Rate -2370 (19%)
- Overall Confidence Rate = 98%

Survey Results:
Respondent Understanding

I have a good understanding of the State Classified Personnel System:

	Very much disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Very much agree
Bumping/retention rights	14%	25%	19%	33%	10%
Upgrading classifications	15%	25%	20%	29%	10%
Pay-for-performance	**15%**	**18%**	**20%**	**35%**	**12%**
Disciplinary process	14%	24%	27%	28%	7%
Grievance process	15%	27%	28%	24%	6%
The rule of three	36%	17%	16%	19%	12%
Averages	**18%**	**23%**	**22%**	**28%**	**9%**

Survey Results:
Overall Themes - Unfavorable

- Performance Management and Compensation:
  - Performance evaluation works; but if it's called pay for performance, it must be funded
  - Increased job responsibilities aren't rewarded
  - Employees aren't motivated to do a better job
    - Few opportunities for promotion
    - Poor performance isn't addressed
    - Difficult to fire poor performers

Survey Results: Clear Strengths

5.	My performance was evaluated fairly during my most recent performance evaluation.	Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Very much disagree		138	6%
Disagree		219	9%
Neutral		355	15%
Agree		988	42%
Very much agree		661	28%
	Total	2361	100%

Total Favorable: 70%

Resulting Changes at CU

- Designing an on-line training on State Personnel System – available to all employees

- Initiating a mandatory training of supervisors of classified staff – including State Personnel System and Performance Management

- Chancellor-led task force to respond to concerns about state personnel at CU